

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INITIAL REACTIONS TO GOI DECISION TO EXPLORE END OF
BELLIGERENCY AGREEMENTS

SUMMARY: ISRAELI CABINET DECISION TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF AGREE-
MENTS BASED ON TERMINATION OF THE STATE OF WAR HAS PROVOKED NEGATIVE
REACTIONS FROM LIKUD OPPOSITION, VARIOUS COALITION MKS AND
PRESS. LABOR ALIGNMENT KNESSET FACTION AND LEADERSHIP
WILL DISCUSS THE DECISION AT MARCH 2 POLITICAL DEBATE.
WHILE LIKUD OPPOSITION REACTION WAS PREDICTABLE,
MODERATE LABOR PARTY POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS ALSO
QUESTION WHETHER LATEST DECISION IS IN ISRAEL'S INTEREST.
WASHINGTON-BASED ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS REPORT THAT
ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS DOUBT WHETHER IT WOULD PROVE
SUFFICIENT TO BREAK THE MIDDLE EAST POLITICAL DEADLOCK.
YEDIOT AHARONOT CARRIES AN INITIAL REPORT OF EGYPTIAN
PRESS NEGATIVE REACTION TO LATEST GOI POSITION. END SUMMARY.

1. FEBRUARY 22 CABINET DECISION APPROVING EXPLORATION

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OF AGREEMENTS BASED ON "TERMINATION OF THE STATE OF WAR"

HAS MET WITH HOSTILE REACTIONS FROM ACROSS THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SPECTRUM. "BOTH HAWKS AND DOVES...CRITICIZE THE CABINET FOR SEEMING TO ABANDON ISRAEL'S LONGHELD INSISTENCE ON FULL PEACE TREATIES WITH THE ARAB STATES." (JERUSALEM POST, LANDAU). LIKUD KNESSET FACTION FEBRUARY 23 ISSUED A STATEMENT ATTACKING CABINET DECISION AS ONE WHICH MAY BRING WAR NEARER. LIKUD STATEMENT HELD THAT "NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN ON ENDING THE STATE OF WAR AND NOT FOR A PEACE TREATY MEANS A WITHDRAWAL WHICH ENDANGERS THE SECURITY OF THE STATE." LIKUD HAS TABLED AN URGENT KNESSET MOTION TO DISCUSS THE "GOVERNMENT'S WILLINGNESS TO HAVE THE US BROACH WITH THE ARAB STATES A SETTLEMENT THAT IS LESS THAN PEACE."

2. CRITICAL COMMENTARY WAS NOT RESTRICTED, HOWEVER, TO THE OPPOSITION RANKS. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER ABBA EBAN SAID THAT THE "ARABS WILL ASK FOR COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE IN RETURN FOR END OF BELLIGERENCY. WHAT IS THERE THEN LEFT TO ASK IN RETURN FOR PEACE--EXCEPT THE ABOLITION OF ISRAEL ITSELF?" NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY MK BEN-MEIR DESCRIBED THE DECISION AS "THE WORST DECISION THIS GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN." MOSHE DAYAN WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HE HOPED THE DECISION "DOES NOT CONTAIN AN OPTION FOR ANY WITHDRAWAL ON THE WEST-BANK."

3. LABOR ALIGNMENT KNESSET FACTION, AND LEADERSHIP WILL HOLD A DEBATE MARCH 2 ON SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY IN WHICH THE LATEST CABINET DECISION IS CERTAIN TO BE A PRINCIPAL TOPIC.

4. EDITORIALS ASK SOME TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT CABINET DECISION. HAARETZ EDITORIAL NOTES TWO BASIC CHANGES FROM RABIN'S EARLIER POSITION: A) HIS ACCEPTANCE OF FURTHER TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IN RETURN FOR LESS THAN A CONTRACTUAL PEACE; AND B) THE INCLUSION OF JORDAN IN THE "EXPLORATION PROCESS". HAARETZ CONCLUDES THAT CABINET DECISION "MAY WELL HAVE BEEN INEVITABLE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GENERAL TREND NOT TO DAMAGE THE FABRIC OF U-ISRAEL RELATIONS.. BUT RABIN CANNOT BE SPARED THE CHARGE OF HAVING TOLD HIS MINISTERS LESS THAN THE FULL TRUTH IN HIS FIRST REPORT... PERHAPS RABIN COUNTS IT AS AN ACHIEVEMENT TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BRING THE CABINET AROUND TO THIS DECISION, BUT DEALING WITH THE CABINET IN SUCH A MANNER

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IS MORE THAN A LITTLE DISHONEST."

5. DAVAR EDITORIAL, WHILE NOT OBJECTING TO THE CABINIST DECISION TO EXPLORE END OF BELLIGERENCY POSSIBILITY, ASKS WHETHER "THE EXACT IMPLICATIONS OF 'ENDING THE STATE OF WAR' SHOULD HAVE BEEN DETERMINED BEFORE THE US WAS AUTHORISED TO PUT OUT FEELERS ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS..."

6. MAARIV ANF YEDIOT AHARONOT EDITORIALS SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE DECISION. ACCORDING TO MAARIV, "IT CAN ONLY INCREASE DOUBTS ABOUT THE CABINET'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS, INTELLECTUAL HONESTY AND ABILITY TO ACT. EITHER WE ARE BEING LED UP THE GARDEN PATH AND NOT TOLD THE FULL TRUTH ABOUT THE PRESSURES PUT ON RABIN DURING HIS LAST VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND WHAT HE COMMITTED ISRAEL TO, OR THERE HAVE BEEN DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENTS THE LAST TWO WEEKS THAT DICTATED AND JUSTIFIED A TURNABOUT ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN IN A CONTEXT OF LESS THAN PEACE.." MAARIV QUESTIONS WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT "IS REALLY ENTITLED TO PUT THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE AND INVOLVE ITSELF IN ANOTHER POLITICAL ADVENTURE THAT CAN ONLY END IN ANOTHER STRANGLEHOLD OF AMERICAN PRESSURE FOR CONCESSIONS WITHOUT ANY REAL CONSIDERATION, ACCOMPANIED BY STERILE LEGALISTIC ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE MEANING OF A FORMULA WHICH WE OURSELVES DO NOT YET UNDERSTAND? YEDIOT AHAROBOT EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THAT "ONLY ONE THING IS CLEAR-- THAT WE SHALL HAVE NO PEACE, AND THAT OUR CAUSE IS REPRESENTED BY A REGIME WHOSE WEAKNESS IS POSITIVELY FRIGHTENING..."

7. WASHINGTON BASED ISRAELI REPORTERS SEE US PRESSURE BEHIND GOI DECISION. JERUSALEM POST (BLITZER) WRITES THAT CABINET'S DECISION GIVES SECRETARY KISSINGER "THE NEEDED GREEN LIGHT TO RESUME HIS MEDIATORY EFFORTS. HE HAD REQUESTED SUCH A CABINET DECISION DURING HIS TALKS WITH RABIN IN WASHINGTON LAST MONTH.. IT...SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE AMERICANS HAD PRESSED RABIN TO COME UP WITH SOME NEW IDEAS AND THE LATEST CABINET DECISION IS SEEN HERE AS THE FIRST STEP..." HAARETZ (MARGALIT) WRITES THAT "THE US IS TREATING GOI DECISION WITH A CAUTIOUS INTEREST... IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER IT EXPRESSES READINESS FOR A SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN ALONE, OR IS CONDITIONED UPON NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA AND EGYPT ALSO..." ACCORDING TO DAVAR (BARNEA) "THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION WILL TRY TO USE THE GOI DECISION TO CALM DOWN THE ARAB WORLD BEFORE THE STRUGGLE FOR THE RESUMPTION OF UNDOF ON THE GOLAN

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IN MAY AND BRING JORDAN INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS ARENA..." FINALLY, MAARIV (SEGEV) WRITES THAT "ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS WELCOMED THE DECISION...BUT STILL WONDER TO WHAT EXTENT THE ISRAELI PROPOSAL WILL PROVE SUFFICIENT TO REVIVE THE DIPLOMATIC MOMENTUM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

IN THE ABSENCE OF THE OFFICIAL TEXT OF THE ISRAELI PROPOSAL, AMERICAN OFFICIALS REFUSED TO SPECULATE ON CHANCES OF ITS SUCCESS, BUT IN A PRIVATE TALK THEY EXPRESSED DOUBTS AS TO ITS SUCCESS... A SENIOR OBSERVER (IN WASHINGTON) NOTED THAT THE LATEST CABINET DECISION IS NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE ONE ADOPTED BY THE MEIR CABINET, WHICH AUTHORIZED IT TO CHANGE ITS POSITION FOR ONLY DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AND ACCEPT INDIRECT NEGOTIATIONS..." BUT IN SPITE OF THE DOUBTS EXPRESSED, THE US WILL SUBMIT THE ISRAELI PROPOSAL TO SADAT AND HUSSEIN.

8. YEDIOT AHARONOT HEADLINE STORY REPORTS NEGATIVE REACTION OF
EGYPTIAN PRESS. "ALL EGYPTIAN NEWSPAPERS REJECT "THE ISRAELI PLAN..."

EDITORIALS OF EGYPT'S NEWSPAPERS STRESS THAT THE ENDING OF THE
STATE OF WAR MUST BE A PART OF AN OVERALL AGREEMENT,
ACCORDING TO WHICH ISRAEL WILL WITHDRAW FROM ALL THE ARAB
OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, THE LEGITIMATE NATIONAL RIGHTS OF THE
PALESTINIANS WILL BE RECOGNIZED AND PEACE GUARANTEES WILL BE
PROVIDED..."

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